

Seventh Grade- Why is there so much pain and suffering in the world?

A question that enters every person's mind at some point or another when thinking about God is this, "if there is a good all powerful loving God out there, why does he allow bad things to happen?" it makes you think right? You maybe not have met, but you definitely will meet people that walk away from their faith in Jesus or reject him outright over this question. This question has been contemplated and argued for centuries and there is a truth about this question we need to address. No one fully knows that answer besides God but we can grasp parts of the answer and we can cling to truths the rest of scripture make clear. So, as we discuss this idea today feel free to ask hard questions, allow yourself to say, "I'm not sure", and participate in the conversation.

Introducing the Topic

Use these questions to help gauge what students already know about the subject and help them begin to verbally process what may be misconceptions or partial understandings of ideas like "good" or "bad" or how much God is involved with those concepts.

-As we dive into this idea of "why is there so much pain and suffering in this world" let's ask this question to get discussion rolling. Have you ever seen or heard of anything on this topic whether on the news or movies or video games or school etc.? (Encourage as many people in the room to share as you can get to speak up. We want this relatively "easy" question to help set the tone for sharing in the group. Essentially, we're asking them "What's the world's answer to this question?")

-Have any of you ever felt like you have personally experienced an injustice or an undeserved negative consequence? (This question may take some reframing but its goal is to help this concept become personal as well)

-So, if you have seen it in the world around you and experienced it personally, why do you think that happens? Why does God let those things happen? Is He okay with that? (This final question in this section is to help the students start critically thinking about concepts they may have never pondered. We want them to realize It's okay to ask big questions about God and his sovereignty)

Scripture Study

As you transition to the Scripture Study portion of this session, remind students that Scripture is where we turn for truth. We want to continually reiterate that we study Scripture not just for the "Christian take" on a matter, but God's revealed word, given to us out of love for our good.

Would it surprise you to know that this very question is even asked of God not once but several times in the Bible? It's true! You can read this same question asked in Psalms, Job, Lamentations, Daniel, Malachi, Jeremiah, the list goes on.

-Read Job 23 together at your tables. (*Explain Job's background. He was a righteous man that God blessed in mighty ways, but terrible circumstances took away his family, his prosperity, and his health. His friends and wife are convinced he did something to wrong God, but he is confident that he did nothing to wrong God. All throughout this book, but especially this chapter Job cries out to God that his circumstances and the circumstances of the world do not always make sense.*)

- What stood out to you from this passage?

- How would you feel if you were in his shoes?

- Do you believe you are allowed to feel those emotions towards God ? (*Especially since these are 7th graders, make sure to let them know they are going to start asking hard questions about their faith and we want them to. No question is off limits, and we would love for them to share their questions, whenever they have them.*)

- What do you think God is going to say in response to Job's question?

-Now skip around in Job 38 & 39. God for two straight chapters asks Job if he knows how any of the mysteries of the world worked knowing full well Job did not have an answer for any of them.

- What stood out to you in God's response?

- Why do you think God answered Job like that?

- What is God saying throughout these two chapters?

- How Does Job respond in ch 40:3-5? Do you think that was an appropriate response?

Practical application

In this lesson we want students to be able to grow in their understanding of how God works in our world. This portion of the conversation is centered around the practical application of the text and aimed at helping students integrate this truth into their walk with the Lord.

-What are some attributes you know to be true about God?

We know truths like God is loving, kind, merciful, that he delivers justice, is powerful, and knows everything. If we fully believe that then we can trust when a mystery isn't fully answered.

-So, if asked, "why is there so much pain in this world" what would you now say?

Lead the students to an answer like "honestly im not totally sure how to answer that question, but what I am sure of is that God loves us. He is all powerful and good, but he is also infinite and

knows all. So even if I never fully grasp the total answer of that question, I trust that he in his infinite knowledge and goodness has a plan that couldn't be any better."

-What further questions do you have?